

# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 211

SP 031 105

AUTHOR Roach, Patricia; Reed, Marlene  
 TITLE Interdepartmental Collaboration: Making the Whole Greater than the Sum of the Parts--A Retrospective View.  
 PUB DATE Mar 89  
 NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Anaheim, CA, March 2-5, 1989).  
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Accreditation (Institutions); \*Cooperative Planning; Educational Change; Higher Education; \*Intercollegiate Cooperation; \*Intergroup Relations; \*Interpersonal Relationship; Program Development; Schools of Education

## ABSTRACT

This presentation was designed to provide insights into the interdepartmental collaboration that occurred at one small rural southern university during the initial process of attempting to meet National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) redesign standards. Because the university was unsuccessful in its first attempt, emphasis was placed on the activities which occurred during the time after the first visit from the NCATE team and the time which preceded the second team visit. The purpose of the paper is to underscore the complexity of the change process as it is related to the limited research on interdepartmental status and prestige. (Author)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

ED306211

Interdepartmental Collaboration:  
Making the Whole Greater than the Sum of  
the Parts - A Retrospective View

by

Patricia Roach, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Education  
Arkansas Tech University  
Russellville, Arkansas 72801

Marlene Reed, Ed.D.  
Professor of Early Childhood and Reading  
Southern Arkansas University  
Magnolia, Arkansas

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*P. Roach*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Paper Presented to AACTE Annual Meeting

March 2-5, 1989

Anaheim, California

SP051 105

Abstract  
Interdepartmental Collaboration:  
Making the Whole Greater than the Sum of  
the Parts - A Retrospective View

This presentation was designed to provide insights into the interdepartmental collaboration that occurred at one small rural southern university during the initial process of attempting to meet NCATE redesign standards. Because the university was unsuccessful in its first attempt, emphasis was placed on the activities which occurred during the time after the first visit from the NCATE team and the time which preceded the second team visit. The purpose of the paper is to underscore the complexity of the change process as it is related to the limited research on interdepartmental status and prestige.

Interdepartmental Collaboration:  
Making the Whole Greater than the Sum of  
the Parts - A Retrospective View

Tension between teacher educators and their academic colleagues is not new. Conant (1963) admitted that he knew about the tension first hand and from his study reported that "even when interactions were not outright hostile, the gap between the two groups continued to be wide." He interpreted the conflict primarily in terms of political power, observing that certification regulations imposed on colleges and universities by State Department of Education officials and public school people created resentment of external coercion. Academic faculty resented professors of education as extensions of the external coercion. Conant indicated that there could also be other reasons for the tension; in some instances "quarrels .... serve to mask more fundamental conflicts over economic, political, racial, or ideological issues." Borrowman (1965) reported that "because of their different experiences, faculty members in teacher education institutions have developed strong biases at such variance with those of their colleagues that compromise provides the only means of achieving cooperation." Lanier and Little (1986) reported "there is an inverse relationship between professional prestige and the intensity of involvement with the formal education of teachers. University faculty and their administrators remain just close enough .... to avoid entrusting it to the "teacher educators" yet they remain sufficiently distant to avoid being identified with the enterprise."

As a small southern rural university began work toward serving as an initial pilot school for the new NCATE redesign standards, the literature cited described the relationship of the school of education and the other departments on campus. Because of the size of the school, a great deal of face-to-face contact existed between faculty members, and although most

school of education faculty members were respected as individuals, generally across campus the school of education was viewed in a negative way.

#### Beginning the process

The institution had held NCATE accreditation for many years and although the Dean of Education alerted other deans and the top administrators to the major changes that were included in the new standards, little concern was shown. Members of the education department became increasingly aware of the dangers of the status quo; however, the concern was not shared by others across campus. Although the school of education graduates approximately 40% of the students; the prestige and power associated with the numbers have not traditionally been present in the Dean of Education's office.

As one of the first four pilot schools, several unique problems existed as an attempt was made to clarify and interpret the new standards, which in many cases appeared to be fluid. This became a special problem for the Dean of Education as he attempted to clarify the new standards for the group. Distrust among the four deans was already present and as new interpretations were made concerning the standards, the group of deans wanted to know what the "real standards" were. As different groups attended meetings and made phone calls to the NCATE office, it became clear, that everybody was "hearing what they wanted to hear." Initially, promises had been made by top administrators concerning changes which the Education Dean had felt were necessary. However, as the evidence grew toward the fluidity of the standards, the top administrators backed off to avert greater conflict within the dean's group and decided to "wait and see." The result was the failure of the school of education to meet NCATE standards.

Because our state is one that uses NCATE as the total criteria for compliance for teacher certification, not meeting NCATE standards meant that

the university was in danger of no longer serving as an organization to prepare teachers for state certification.

#### A Change in the Definition of the Situation

During the initial effort it had been extremely difficult to get any cooperation from other departments. The NCATE study was viewed as something that was of concern only to the school of education. When notification of failure was received many professors still failed to understand the seriousness of the situation. However, the seriousness was not lost on the new acting Academic Vice-President.

Although the education department had recognized the impending crisis, external events gave the crisis status. They (NCATE) had denied us (University) accreditation. For the first time it became a significant event for the whole campus; a clear and present danger to the survival of the group. Liberal arts professors realized that many of the general education and specialty majors were in fact education majors; to remove this group would mean that fewer professors would be needed in all departments, not just education.

The collaboration efforts that began as a result of the external crisis did not occur out of love and caring for the education department. It began as a directive from the office of the academic dean and was specifically tied to the self interest of all groups. Although the second time around the unit was more clearly defined, the collaboration was linked to the goal of "keeping the enrollment of the university at its current level", a goal that only indirectly spoke to the new NCATE standards. Meeting the standards, although not particularly important to many professors across campus, was the means to the desired end.

The collaboration which resulted from agreement on the broad general goal led specifically to improvements and changes needed to meet NCATE redesign standards. Attitudes, or at least actions, at the deans level changed, creating an atmosphere of willing cooperation. Money and other resources became available which had previously been blocked, and the deans threw their support behind two major curriculum efforts designed to document the overall academic programs of all education students and the writing of uniform syllabi. Although these efforts consumed many clock hours, overall the professors and deans cooperated in a timely manner.

#### Major Collaboration Effort

The major collaboration effort consisted of two comprehensive curriculum projects designed to document the total program of each education student. The definition of the knowledge base guided the task. Documentation included a broad general knowledge base, a comprehensive specialty area, an indepth professional knowledge component, ending with a state approved teaching model. The documentation was collected from each professor who taught a course which was included in any part of the preservice teacher's program. Although it came as a surprise to many professors to learn that they were indeed part of the teacher education program, the success of the project was overwhelming. Each professor was ask to identify the major topics covered in the course and to approximate the number of hours spent on each topic. In addition, professors were asked to identify major teaching strategies and required assignments. The second task consisted of writing a course syllabi that reflected the reported course topics with a comprehensive bibliography for the course.

The information was collected and organized into a map of the curriculum. An overview was written of the findings of the general education and

specialty studies and a master matrix was compiled of information from the professional component. From the curriculum mapping project, each academic major may be carefully studied to determine needs as well as areas that are overtaught. The syllabi reflected the self reported curriculum topics.

In addition to the major curriculum projects, dual assignments were given to persons in other departments who taught various methods courses. With this change, all of the methods courses were taught by professors officially assigned to the education unit. Although there had been strong initial resistance, during the time of collaboration after failure of the NCATE standards needed changes were put into place with little overt disagreement.

#### Results of the Collaborative Effort

The results of the collaborative effort improved the level of concern for the welfare of the education unit. There was a greater understanding that many teacher educators on our campus were in departments other than education. In addition the results of the curriculum mapping project undertaken by the education department indicated that students preparing to be teachers had a much broader background than had been previously documented.

On the negative side as we "fixed" some things, others began to fall apart or to create internal tension; this was especially true of the several new faculty members who joined the team during the time when experienced faculty members had little time to "show them the ropes".

It is still too soon to analyze the results of the collaborative efforts overall; however, we have learned some things about ourselves and the way in which our group reacted to an external threat. The following are major considerations.

1. We learned that our top university administration is crisis oriented. An external crisis is needed in order for them to have the courage to intervene in the status quo.
2. We learned that the closer we were to the crisis situation, the greater the level of collaboration and cooperation. Individual differences were put on hold and the survival of the group, at least at the leadership level, was one of cooperation.
3. We learned that as we moved away from the crisis, the disbelief of danger to the group became more pronounced for all except those in the education department and old patterns of behavior began to take the place of the collaborative effort based on crisis.
4. We learned that the strengths of the education program as a whole are much greater than we had thought. At this time the teacher education program at our school is better understood and better documented because of the departmental collaboration that has taken place. Ideally, interdepartmental collaboration will become the norm. Realistically, because of a crisis situation in which interdepartmental collaboration occurred, we now know that the whole of the program is truly greater than the sum of its parts. Hopefully, some of the efforts will remain as strong reminders of the strength that we have as an interdepartmental group.

#### References

1. Borrowman, M.L. (Ed.) (1965b) Teacher Education in America: A Documentary History. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University (p.41)
2. Conant, J.B. (1963) The Education of American Teachers. New York: McGraw - Hill. (p.12)
3. Lanier, Judith and Judith W. Little, "Research on Teacher Education" Handbook of Research on Teaching, (1986) (3rd Ed.) Merlin C. Wittrock (ed.) New York: Macmillen Publishing Co. (p.530)